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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000177

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KV](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: GRUEVSKI RECEPTIVE TO ADVICE ON NAME,
NATO ENGAGEMENT?

REF: A. STATE 33709

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 156 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Reeker for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: PM Gruevski was receptive to the Ambassador's advice on the name issue and continued engagement with NATO in the course of a wide-ranging conversation April 15. Ambassador pressed for retention of CHOD LTG Stojanovski, a positive public tone and negotiating stance toward Greece on the "name issue," and constructiveness on Kosovo. Gruevski responded positively if cautiously on all counts. However, harsh public comments on the name by FonMin Milososki the very next day cast some doubts on the GoM's credibility. End summary.

Get to Work

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador congratulated Gruevski on successful March 22 and April 5 elections, which generally met international standards and were a vast improvement over parliamentary elections last year. We were also impressed by the improved tone during and afterwards, where Gruevski praised his longtime nemesis, Branko Crvenkovski, for his service as president, and presidential runner-up Ljubomir Frckoski congratulated the winner, Gjorge Ivanov. Now, however, it is time to govern: Gruevski's VMRO has control of both the parliament and the presidency, plus 55 of 85 municipal governments, with no new elections in sight.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador reviewed the work he and the Embassy had done to keep Washington and other allies engaged even as Gruevski indulged in various actions against Greece following the 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit and appeared to distance Macedonia from the Alliance. At the 2009 Summit, the President clearly signaled our continuing desire to see Macedonia join NATO pending a solution to the name issue, and all the Allies overlooked the problems post-Bucharest to reaffirm this. In turn, the Obama Administration needs strong signals from the GoM that it is ready to move smartly on the name issue and on reforms necessary for Euro-Atlantic integration. Given our reaffirmed commitment and Gruevski's domestic political capital, there are no excuses left.

Concrete Engagement Critical

[1](#)4. (C) One step in this direction, Ambassador continued, would be to retain CHOD LTG Stojanovski at least until the 2010 NATO Summit. (Rumors have been all over town for months that one of Ivanov's first moves as President -- i.e., as Commander in Chief -- would be to replace Stojanovski on Gruevski's insistence, allegedly for being close to Crvenkovski and the opposition SDSM party.) Stojanovski has the full confidence of the Macedonian military, is trusted by senior U.S. and other Allied officials, military and civilian, is best positioned to advise Ivanov on military reform, and has no apparent successor with the same

capabilities. Between now and next spring, the CHOD could groom a successor with whom Ivanov would be comfortable. Gruevski responded that "I have nothing against Stojanovski," and that he had never raised the issue with Ivanov. However, Gruevski continued, the General has shown a predilection for politics in the past and needs to be sure to be professional at all times. (Comment: Post and other NATO Embassies here see nothing to substantiate suggestions that Stojanovski is at all political. End comment.) He added that he did not see why Ivanov would want to replace him, and said he would speak to Ivanov about the matter.

15. (C) Gruevski thanked us for President Obama's positive statement on Macedonia at the NATO Summit, and appreciated that the USG was still looking out for Macedonia's interests up to the highest levels. He pledged not to provoke Greece, but asked that the same message be given to Athens as well: "We do not have 100 years to solve this problem." Gruevski noted that he never raised the name issue during the election campaign except when queried by reporters, and even then only provided a short summary of what he understood to be the Greek position without additional commentary except that he hoped the issue could be solved after both countries' elections (Greece holds European Parliament elections in June).

16. (C) Unfortunately, Gruevski's measured tone was belied the following day by harsh and gratuitous public comments by FonMin Milososki. Responding to recent public comments by Greek Ambassador to Washington Mallias that the name "Republic of North Macedonia" could be an acceptable name for Greece -- as well as some local press analysis suggesting

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that the GoM might consider this -- Milososki came out swinging. He accused those seeking to "make easy and clumsy concessions" on the name of aiding and abetting the Greek "agenda" to "harm the national and linguistic identity of the Macedonian people and the Macedonian citizens. As politicians, journalists, and citizens, we have a sovereign right...and an obligation to protect our national identity." We will make clear to Gruevski that his FonMin's comments cast his commitment to a better tone into serious doubt.

Despite Complete Control, Fears Remain

17. (C) Gruevski cited a number of concerns on the name negotiations. He worried that Karamanlis' weak political position would make it hard for him to make a deal. Amazingly, Gruevski even said he feared the opposition in Macedonia; despite SDSM's weakened state, he saw Crvenkovski as a formidable foe who could create major headaches for the GoM, if not on the name than on other issues. Ambassador responded that Gruevski must engage in skilled public diplomacy, not provoking Greece while appearing reasonable and open to serious negotiations. Additionally, Macedonia must improve its engagement of the Alliance in Brussels, either empowering its Ambassador there to engage more actively or replace him with someone who will.

Getting to Yes on Kosovo Issues

18. (C) Deploying ref a points, Ambassador also pressed for Macedonia's "yes" vote for Kosovo membership in the World Bank and IMF. Gruevski responded that he could not see why Macedonia would not support this in the course of normalizing relations following its recognition of Kosovo in Oct 2008. Clearly weighing bilateral ties with Belgrade, Gruevski added that he did not envision that Serbia would see this as a major additional blow. Ambassador also requested that Gruevski seriously consider Kosovo's latest proposal in order to complete the demarcation of the Macedonia-Kosovo border. Gruevski listened but said he preferred options that would not require him to approach the Parliament in order to change

the 2001 border agreement between Serbia and Macedonia, which is the basis for the current demarcation exercise.

Economy Still Critical

19. (C) In addition to the name issue, Gruevski said he remains focused on the same issues as before the election campaign, specifically the economy and judicial reform. Even during the campaign, he said he was meeting frequently with economic experts, businesspeople, etc to alleviate the impact of the global economic slowdown on Macedonia.

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